Project North plans



CARLOS GALARZA | THE JOURNAL

Hank Colon, a vendor at the Highway 11 Flea Market, said plans to develop a recreational complex in the area would "introduce us to the world."

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Larry Joiner said he purchased 10 acres from the father of the man close to selling 415-acres to Oconee County.

Joiner used most of the 10 acres be bought from the late Molgro England in 1995 to put up the Highway 11 Flea Market.

He's excited that 15 years later, England's son "Snook" England is close to wrapping up a $2.5 million deal with Oconee for the 415-acre tract.

"It won't hurt us," Joiner said with a smile of the county's plans to develop half of the acreage into a recreation complex with baseball and soccer fields, walking trails, picnic areas, a civic center and 2,000-seat amphitheater.

"I'm glad the county will get the property because they have the means to develop it instead of letting the land just sit there."

Vendors at the Flea Market who come from Seneca, Walhalla, Westminster and other areas wholeheartedly agree with Oconee's initiative.

Hank Colon, who unsuccessfully ran for elected office in Westminster several times in the past, said the news is long overdue.

"They need to do something to put Oconee on the

thrill some

map," said the retired cop from Long Island, N.Y.

Colon said the county can't go wrong by putting recreation there.

"By having something like they plan, you could really say 'if you build it, they will come,'" he said.

Tom Smith said the county is going to spend tax money one way or another.

"I'd rather they spend the money on something here that we can see and use," Smith said. "In the long run it's going to help all of Oconee County."

Smith said the county wants to bring industries here, but "industrialists want to know, what is there for my children to do?"

County Council is holding a public hearing Nov. 23 to let residents speak their minds on the Highway 11 land purchase.

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